

**Testimony of the New York City Transit Riders Council to the
Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority
on Proposed Fare Increases and Service Reductions
Sheraton LaGaurdia , Flushing, N.Y.
January 20, 2009**

My name is Michael Sinansky and I am the Vice-Chairperson of the New York City Transit Riders Council (NYCTRC) and the Queens Borough President Helen Marshall's representative to the Transit Riders Council.

As representatives of transit riders in New York City, we find the proposed fare increases and service cuts that are before you to be unacceptable. It is particularly offensive to hold paratransit customers, many of whom can scarcely afford their current cost of travel, hostage to a potential \$6.00 fare. We have called and will continue to call upon our elected representatives to support new funding sources for the MTA that will ensure that these unacceptable fare increase proposals are not implemented.

The proposed fare increases that are before you are disastrous, but the proposed service cuts are equally as bad. Transit in New York City is a system, and you cannot compromise major elements of the system without damaging the whole system. New Yorkers depend on transit to get around the City twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This level of service that is proposed is simply not adequate for a city that is open for business 24/7.

The severe service cuts proposed in off-peak hours are a serious threat to the safety and reliability of the system. Thirty minute subway headways in the

overnight hours would make the system all but unusable. Combine these new schedules with the reductions or eliminations in off-peak bus service on many routes, and you are making overnight transit service a frightening and dangerous experience for riders, many of whom have no other viable choices. As a case in point, the MTA is proposing to discontinue weekend bus service on the following Queens bus routes:

- Q-14 from Flushing to Whitestone
- Q-31 from Jamaica to Auburndale
- Q-76 from Jamaica to College Point
- Q-79 from Little Neck to Floral Park
- Q-84 from Jamaica to Laurelton

It is alarming to note that each of these five (5) Queens bus routes slated for elimination of weekend service are either in southeastern or northeastern Queens, where alternative subway service does not exist. Subway service in Queens terminates at Jamaica and Flushing. So much for alternative methods of public transportation.

The MTA has the franchise to serve the ENTIRE city, not just the profitable areas. In addition, the loss of 50% of the service on the R/W line by eliminating the W is unacceptable, as is the loss of the Z train, which will cause riders to divert to the already-packed E train if they begin their trips in Jamaica or Richmond Hill. Further packing people onto already crowded trains by changing from 100% to 125% of seated load capacity on B division trains will cause riders to seek other means of transportation. Further, the MTA's proposed elimination of the toll rebate program for Queens residents using the Cross Bay Bridge will result in the only intraborough bridge in the entire City of New York being a tolled facility. This bridge provides vital and emergency services access between the communities of the Rockaway peninsula and the Broad Channel community which share a common police precinct, the same school board district and the same community board, to name a few. Some affected residents view this proposed action of the MTA as simply vindictive.

We are also greatly disturbed that our subway stations will become even more lonely and dirty under these proposals. In addition, we believe that reduced station area track cleaning will take its toll in terms of increased flooding and track fires. The constant flooding and disruption of service on the Queens Boulevard subway line will only get worse. We must take the costs of delays from these service disruptions into account, before adding up the savings from these ill-advised planned actions.

We are fully in favor of increasing efficiency in the system, but the service changes that have been proposed are largely a matter of cutting muscle and bone rather than fat. For example, the move to eliminate bus service parallel to subway lines ignores the fact that these two modes of travel often serve distinct

groups of users. Many bus riders are unable to use the subway system due to mobility constraints, and the subway system is far from fully accessible. The sad fact is that even these ill considered cuts do not even make a large dent in the MTA's deficit, as in 2009 they close less than 5 percent of the \$1.2 billion hole in the Authority's finances.

The New York City Transit Riders Council calls upon this Board to consider the resources that are needed to provide an acceptable level of service and to take decisive action to pursue these resources. We reject a budget that raises fares dramatically only to keep the transit system on life support.